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The Lough here is about a mile and half broad; and, from where we stood, which was at the bottom of a shallow bay formed by two points of land, Goblusk and Gobrood, we had a view of Ely island, with the improvements, and lodge of the Marquis of that name, lying at the opposite side; the space between adorned, without being crowded, by a number of islands scattered over it, which rose from the silver surface of the lake, in fine green knolls, many of them covered with trees to the water's edge. To the right, the prospect was terminated by the high point of Goblusk, which runs far into the lake; while, on our left, we saw the country towards Enniskillen, and could just distinguish the ancient tower of Devenish rising in solitary grandeur from the water. About four miles further, is the village of Lisnarrick, where we stopped for about an hour; and, although it is a poor place, and the accommodation of the simplest kind, we procured an excellent breakfast; which, though not served in the most elegant manner, was rendered pleasant by the apparent wish of the old landlady to make us happy. Before arriving at this village, we had stopped at Castle Archdall, the seat of Gen. Archdall, situated on a high bank overlooking a small bay of Lough Erne; of which, and many of its islands, it commands an extensive view. The house, though modern, is large and surrounded by a plantation of fine old trees.

From Lisnarrick, we proceeded to Pettigo, catching occasionally a view of Lough Erne, which, in all directions, is certainly a most beautiful object; and hurried on as rapidly as possible, intending to sleep at Ballyshannon, after having visited, in our way, Lough Dergh and Castle Calwell—a plan which we afterwards found it impossible to execute.

In my next, I shall give you some account of our visit to Lough Dergh.—In the meantime, I remain yours, &c.

E—.

ON THE CULTURE OF POTATOES.

To the EDITOR of the BELFAST MAGAZINE.

SIR,

I was much pleased with the directions to farmers, respecting the choice of seeds, which were given in your last Agricultural Report. The article in question contains, in small compass, a variety of observations on the subject, which I can, from experience, pronounce to be most valuable.—The agricultural department of your Magazine appears to be in good hands; and I anticipate much useful information to farmers, from the observations of your reporter. Without

wishing, in any respect, to supersede his remarks, for the next Number, I beg leave to offer some directions, suggested by actual observation and practical experience, respecting the culture of that invaluable root, which constitutes the principal food of the bulk of our population, namely, the Potato. At the present season, some directions of this kind must be allowed to be appropriate, and may perhaps be useful.

I begin with the *time* of planting.—In treating of this point, the propriety of *early planting* cannot be too much impressed upon farmers. The practice of late planting, which is too common, is *productive* of the worst consequences. The *quality* of the crops thus planted, is invariably bad. The vegetable is soft, watery, and unwholesome. This will be the case even in the most favourable season. But, if frosts come on in autumn, as is usual in this climate, the crop will be of little value, either in point of quantity or quality. In the portion of such potatoes as are consumed in the farmer's own family, there will be a great loss, owing to the quantity which will be rejected and thrown aside. Even his cattle will not thrive upon them. To bring such an article to market, and to impose it on the public, is, in a moral point of view, palpably unjust. It is equally impolitic. The inferior quality being soon detected, the seller loses character, and will afterwards be unable to dispose of even a good article to advantage. In this, as in most other human affairs, the farmer's duty and interest are placed in the same scale. I have been in the habit of cultivating potatoes to a considerable extent; and have, for several years, laid my plans so as to commence planting about the middle of March—and to finish, at the latest, about the middle of May. My crops have, in consequence, been so excellent in point of *quality*, that they have been eagerly sought for in the market, and have always brought the highest price. It may be added, that where wheat is intended to succeed potatoes, early planting, by producing early ripening, will enable the farmer to have his potatoes raised in proper time, to get forward with his sowing. Let the farmer, then, use all diligence to complete forthwith the planting of this invaluable vegetable. At any rate, let him take his measures so as to be able to finish the work of planting, at the latest, about the middle of May. A crop planted previous to that, will have a fair chance of combining the desirable results of *quantity* and *quality*. In crops planted later, there will be a *risk* as to the *first*, and an *undoubted failure* as to the latter particular.

Another circumstance which merits the farmer's attention, is to ascertain the most *profitable species* of potato.—I have tried various kinds; and have no hesitation in asserting, that,

for the principal crop, the most profitable kind which I have ever seen is that called *seedlings*. They are superior to all kinds with which I am acquainted in *productiveness*. The *quality* of them is likewise superior, with the exception of about six weeks in summer, when the apple potato is preferable. The portion of small ones which they produce, if properly managed, is inconsiderable. It may be added, that the stalks, when growing, are bushy and luxuriant—so that they overshadow the ground, keep down weeds, and prepare the soil in a superior manner for a succeeding crop.

The *size of the potato selected for seed*, is another circumstance deserving the farmer's particular attention. On this point, it is to be regretted that a most erroneous practice prevails. From a mistaken principle of economy, it is too common to plant the smaller sort of potatoes. Small, stunted, curled stalks, and a diminished produce, will, in general, be found to be the consequence of this practice. Nor can the seedlings be in this way kept pure. There is a tendency in this species, which is increased by the practice in question, to degenerate into the old worn-out black potato. Of this kind, there is more or less of a mixture amongst *seedlings*. The former (the worn-out black potatoes) are generally of an inferior size, so that in cutting they are not so easily distinguished. Hence, a degenerate kind is liable to be propagated. But, even supposing the seedlings to be free from the mixture in question, the practice of planting the *smaller ones* will produce a degenerate species, and a diminished crop. I once planted in the same field, and treated exactly in the same way, two different kinds of *seedlings*; the one of the *largest*, the other by no means of the *smallest*, but comparatively of a considerably *smaller* size. Great pains were taken to preserve both kinds free from mixture. The consequence was, that the produce of the *large seed* was *large* and *unadulterated*, whilst the produce of the other was exactly the reverse; and, in point of *quantity*, the former was superior to the amount of about 100 bushels to the Cunningham acre. Had the *smallest seed* been planted, it is probable that the difference would have been proportionably greater. Instead, then, of planting a small inferior kind, the farmer should invariably select for his seed the largest and most healthy, and the sets taken from such potatoes should be of a good size.

The *end of the potato proper to be cut for seed*, is another point to be considered. This should invariably be, what is denominated by farmers, the *rose end*. Sets should never be taken from the root end of the potato. Such sets have been found, by that best of all tests *experience*, to produce weak, sickly stalks, and an inferior crop. Though, however, the

sets should be always taken from the rose ends, the root ends need not be lost. They may be dressed, and brought to the table, or given to cattle. It may be added, that the directions respecting selecting potatoes of a large size, and taking the seed from the rose end, apply to all kinds of potatoes, as well as to *seedlings*.

Further, in order to obtain good crops, it is indispensably necessary occasionally to change the seed,—to bring potatoes from a soil and climate different from that on which they are to be planted. This rule likewise applies to all the different species of this root. When such a change is made, potatoes should be brought from a soil inferior to that on which they are to be cultivated. For gravelly, sandy, or clay soils, and for low lying land,—potatoes grown in a mountainous district, and on a moory or boggy soil, are the most suitable. An occasional change of this kind has been proved, by repeated experiments, to be attended with the most beneficial results, and cannot be too much recommended. At the same time, I do not consider the practice which some farmers follow, of changing their seed potatoes *every year*, to be either necessary or *profitable*. When potatoes have been brought from *an inferior soil*, such as has been described, and which has been well ascertained to be most eligible, they have been found *progressively to improve* for two years. Observation and experience have confirmed me in this opinion. I therefore feel confident in stating, that the second year's crop from such seed, other things being equal, will be better than the first; the third will be fully as good, though inferior to the second. A change of seed, every third or fourth year, is therefore, I consider, sufficient.

In concluding this article, I would advise the farmer not to subject himself to the necessity of being parsimonious of his manure, by attempting to plant too great a breadth of ground. *One acre manured well*, will produce as much as *two manured badly*; whilst in the former case there will be a saving of one half, both in seed and labour. The same principle will likewise apply to the succeeding crops.

I have only to add, that the utility of the foregoing directions has not only been illustrated by my own observation and experience, but confirmed by the approbation of all the intelligent farmers with whom I have conversed, in the district in which I reside—a district which is one of the best cultivated in the North of Ireland.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

AGRICOLA.

April 12th, 1825.